

Pattern: *Midge, Flirt, Ant & Chub*, oared gunboat; Introduced in to NZ Service: 1863; Withdrawn: 1864
Builder: Unknown but converted at Onehunga by George Ellis.
Length OA: 30 to 35 feet; Hull: wooden sailing cutter; Propulsion: 6 oar (sweeps), or towed by steamer.
Armament: one 12 Pdr. BL Armstrong field gun, with wheels removed, one 4.5 in Coehorn Mortar.



Ant and Chub, courtesy Grant Middlemiss

New Zealand Service

Four large coastal sailing cutters were purchase in Auckland and taken over land to Onehunga where they were fitted out for war service by George Elliot under the supervision of Captain Mercer. Each vessel was armour plated with 0.25 in thick x 3 - 4 inch wide iron plate from gunwale to waterline. Each boat had a platform in the bow for a 12 Pdr BL Armstrong field gun, with wheels removed and the hull pierced for rifles and sweeps.

Each vessel was under the command of a junior Royal Navy officer: Sub Lt Robert Frederick Hammick *Ant* senior officer, Midshipman C.S. Hunt *Chub*, Midshipman Frank Elrington Hudson *Flirt*, and Midshipman Cecil George Foljambe *Midge*. They were crewed by seven sailors and used for transporting troops and stores and as floating artillery.

All four were towed from Manakau harbour by *HMS Eclipse* early on the morning of Saturday 24 October 1863 and entered the Waikato before noon. Here they were engaged in the battles at Meremere (31 October) and Rangariri (20 November).

Midge sank on the Waipa River in February 1864, the fate of the others is unknown.

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The Waikato River Gunboats by Grant Middlemiss